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From Immigrant to Ethnic: Interview with Charlotte Lee by Joseph Conforti

Charlotte Lee

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Rhode Island College
ETHNIC STUDIES PROJECT

Oral History Interview # 14

with

Charlotte Lee

May 14, 1976

By Joseph Conforti

Tape 1 Side 1

- 8 Mother's grandmother was free. Lived in Virginia and then moved to Boston to work and make money to go back to Virginia and buy her husband's freedom.
- 18 Parents told her how great-grandmother worked, saved \$1,000. and bought her husband's freedom, moved back to Boston and worked in underground railroad helping girls who stopped in Boston.
- 34 Her family lived in Malden. Her parents grew up in Boston in a black neighborhood near the State House.
- 46 Her father was in the service before marriage, stationed in Newport. Married after service and had 7 children. Moved to Newport in 1907. Lived on West Broadway.
- 66 Father worked as a mason.
- 75 Nice neighborhood. Portuguese, Irish and Blacks--all got along. She was in Girl Scouts, church group.
- 108 Church important, social gatherings. Most of her friends were from black community but did socialize with some Portuguese.
- 135 Schooling: graduated from grammar school. Attended 2 years of high school in Newport then family moved to Providence.
- 151 She never thought of prejudice and segregation when she was young. They were poor and mother taught them to work for what they wanted. They all worked as children--girls in homes of white families, boys on docks.

Charlotte Lee

- 194 Moved to Providence when 16. One sister was beginning course at RICE and another was returning from South to pursue master's degree. Brief account of what brothers and sisters did.
- 234 Not aware of discrimination in Newport, was happy there.
- 244 Moved to Providence, joined church, went to school then made new friends. Lived in area of University Heights, mostly black and Jewish neighborhood. Liked Providence better, felt better class of people here.
- 299 Description of living conditions in Newport and Providence.
- 324 Attended Hope High school, some discrimination evident but she never did anything about it.
- 374 Church important in black community, regular services, youth group, plays, dinners.
- 438 After graduation from high school, she worked in East Side home to save money to enter nurse's training.
- 511 Went to New York for training because Rhode Island Hospital wouldn't take her.

Tape 1 Side 2

- 3 Attended Lincoln School of Nursing in Bronx--all black. Claims she didn't resent fact she couldn't train in Providence. Worked in hospitals serving only blacks.
- 31 Only opportunities for black women were as nurse, teacher or domestic. Both her sisters had to go to southern states to get jobs as teachers in black schools.
- 72 Lived in New York from 1929-49. Lived in Harlem for a time. There during one of first race riots, frightened by it. Description of her life in New York, social activities, living conditions.
- 133 Noticed same passive attitude about discrimination in Harlem, at first.
- 141 Married man from East Providence and returned here. Lived on Sutton Avenue where there was a small black community.

Charlotte Lee

- 197 Worked at Rhode Island Hospital after her return from
 New York.
- 218 Lived on Pawtucket Avenue, found it pleasant, no problems.
- 298 She doesn't think in terms of black neighborhoods--all
 her neighbors are friendly toward her.
- 304 Church membership and activities.
- 338 Civic activities.
- 357 She feels people now try to fight for their rights,
 unlike when she was younger. People fought building of
 low-income housing in her present neighborhood. She
 feels conditions are better now.